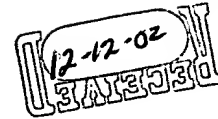


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purposes of this disclosure it is assumed that such a navigation function requires a bandwidth of approximately 3.3 million bits per second (Mbps). Thus, at step 206, 3.3Mbps of bandwidth is reserved for the customer or subscriber of step 204.

IN THE CLAIMS

Please replace claims 17, 19, 20, 23, 24, 26-35, 37-38, and 43 with the following amended claims:

Sub C1
17. (amended) In a video-on-demand (VOD) distribution system comprising provider equipment and subscriber equipment, said provider equipment providing VOD content to said subscriber equipment via a forward channel, said subscriber equipment requesting said VOD content via a back channel, a method comprising the steps of:

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determining whether said VOD distribution system has sufficient bandwidth available to provide VOD content requested by a subscriber; providing, in the event of appropriate bandwidth availability, said requested VOD content to said subscriber using said appropriate bandwidth; and providing, in the event of minimum bandwidth availability, said requested VOD content to said subscriber using said minimum bandwidth.

Sub C1
19. (amended) The method of claim 18, further comprising the step of: repeating, for a predetermined number of iterations, said step of waiting and said first and second steps of providing said requested VOD content.

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20. (amended) The method of claim 19, further comprising the step of denying, after said predetermined number of iterations, access to said requested VOD content to said subscriber.

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23. (amended) The method of claim 17, wherein said requested VOD content is stored in said provider equipment at an appropriate bandwidth level and at a minimum bandwidth level.

24. (amended) The method of claim 17, wherein said appropriate bandwidth level represents a bandwidth level sufficient to provide said requested information to said subscriber without qualitatively degrading said requested information, and said minimum bandwidth level represents a bandwidth level sufficient to provide said requested information to said subscriber where said requested information is qualitatively degraded.

26. (amended) The method of claim 25, wherein said component loading levels are determined with respect to the type of VOD content requested.

27. (amended) The method of claim 26, wherein said VOD content type comprises one of a video, audio, audiovisual and data type.

28. (amended) The method of claim 27, wherein said VOD content types comprise video formats having differing quality levels.

29. (amended) The method of claim 26, wherein information requests from each of a plurality of requesting subscribers are used to provide VOD content type data for modeling the component loading levels, said subscriber requests for VOD content being aggregated to control bandwidth utilization levels such that information degradation is managed in an orderly fashion.

30. (amended) In an video-on-demand (VOD) distribution system comprising provider equipment and subscriber equipment, said provider equipment providing VOD content to said subscriber equipment via a forward channel, said subscriber equipment requesting said information via a back channel, provider equipment apparatus comprising:

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a session manager, for receiving VOD content requests from said subscriber equipment and determining, for each received request, whether said VOD distribution system has sufficient bandwidth available to provide the requested VOD content; and

an information server, coupled to said session manager, for providing said requested VOD content at an appropriate bandwidth in the case of appropriate bandwidth availability, and for providing said requested VOD content at a minimal bandwidth in the case of at least minimal bandwidth availability.

31. (amended) The apparatus of claim 30, wherein:

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said session manager, in response to a determination that less than a minimum bandwidth is available, waiting for a predetermined period of time and determining, for each received VOD content request not being fulfilled, whether said VOD distribution system has sufficient bandwidth available to provide the requested VOD content.

32. (amended) The apparatus of claim 31, wherein:

said session manager, in response to a final determination that less than a minimum bandwidth is available, denying access to said VOD content to said requesting subscriber.

33. (amended) The apparatus of claim 30, further comprising:

a transport processor, for packetizing information provided by said information server;

said session manager determining said VOD distribution system bandwidth with respect to at least a bandwidth utilization level of said transport processor.

34. (amended) The apparatus of claim 30, further comprising:

a plurality of data storage devices, coupled to said information server via a video switch;

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said session manager determining said VOD distribution system bandwidth with respect to at least one a bandwidth utilization level of said video switch and a bandwidth utilization level of a storage devices including said requested information.

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35. (amended) The apparatus of claim 30, further comprising:
a digital video modulator, for modulating packetized information streams onto a carrier;
said session manager determining said VOD distribution system bandwidth with respect to a bandwidth utilization level of said digital video modulator.

Sub C1
37. The apparatus of claim 30, wherein said requested VOD content is stored in said provider equipment at an appropriate bandwidth level and at a minimum bandwidth level.

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38. (amended) The apparatus of claim 30, wherein said appropriate bandwidth level represents a bandwidth level sufficient to provide said requested VOD content to said subscriber without qualitatively degrading said requested VOD content, and said minimum bandwidth level represents a bandwidth level sufficient to provide said requested VOD content to said subscriber where said requested VOD content is qualitatively degraded.

Sub C1
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43. (amended) The apparatus of claim 40, wherein information requests from each of a plurality of requesting subscribers are used to provide VOD content type data for modeling the component loading levels, said subscriber requests for VOD content being aggregated to control bandwidth utilization levels such that information degradation is managed in an orderly fashion.